Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF 1 February-March 1994

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The Letter 1994, FROM ONE BEGINNING TO ANOTHER, was written by Brother Roger for the European meeting of young people held at the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994. This meeting, a stage in the "pilgrimage of trust" animated by Taize, brought together 80,000 young adults from all the countries of Europe in Munich. Translated into 48 languages (including 21 languages of Asia), this letter will be reflected on during the INTERCONTINENTAL MEETINGS OF YOUNG PEOPLE that will be held in Taizé week after week during the entire year of 1994.

From One Beginning to Another

LETTER 1994

If, at each dawn, we were able to welcome the new day like a beginning of a new life... "Whoever advances toward God goes from one beginning to another."[1]

Do we realize that God buries our past in the heart of Christ, and is going to take care of our future?

Were it possible to fathom our human heart, the surprising thing would be to discover there the longing, short-lived or long-lasting, for an invisible presence.

Although there may well be shocks and even upheavals in our lives, the Risen Christ is there.[2] He could say to us, "When you are going through the harshest trials, I am present underneath your despair. And remember: I am also in the depths of your radiant hopes."[3]

Chase away fleeting troubles like a child blowing on a fallen leaf. Don't cling to worries like a hand clutching the branch of a thorn bush; let go instead. Surrender to Christ whatever assails your heart.[4]

Whoever lingers over failures and discouragements sees the fibres of the soul become rigid. In

1 Saint Gregory of Nyssa, fourth century.

2 If Jesus had not lived among us, God would seem far away, unattainable. But, by his birth and his life on earth, Jesus let who God was shine through. God's trust in human beings was so great that he hoped they would recognize him in a newborn baby and in a crucified man. And if Christ were not risen, he would not be present today alongside us. He would remain one exceptional individual among others in the history of humanity. But it would not be possible to converse with him in prayer.

3 Christ does not only wait for us in light, in peace, in joy. He is also present in the distress of those who grope along to find a way out. There can be moments when things look dark. But such obscurity is not pitch-darkness. It is not the dead of night. The light of Christ still penetrates it.

4 Inner silence is not a forced attitude to create a kind of emptiness within. It consists in abandoning ourselves to Christ. And inner silence leads to a maturity, to self-mastery. Of course there are trials in every life; they can be very hard to bear. But it can happen that in some cases a trial may seek to convince us that we are the victims of fate. Are we going to make use of trials in order to call attention to ourselves? No, this would mean making suffering the basis of human relations; it would mean imposing the full weight of our own distress and using it as a lever to put pressure on others.

new beginnings, peace of heart and a Gospel joy can change our life.[5]

The Holy Spirit fills us with gifts. How can we discern them and dare to believe in them?[6]

Are we being visited by passing doubts?[7] That shouldn't stop us; there is nothing alarming about doubt.[8]

All who listen, by day as well as in the watches of the night, all who welcome the gifts of the Holy Spirit, will discover that with almost nothing, they have everything.

With a simple heart, almost a child's soul,[9] happy are they who say to Christ: Risen Christ, you see who I am. I find it necessary not to hide anything in my heart from you. You yourself were a human being. And you welcome me with what I am. My thirsting heart asks you: Christ Jesus, unify my desire and my thirst.

When we pray, even if our lips remain closed, our heart can be open before God. God's voice makes itself understood — an inner voice, steeped in silence.[10]

And to pray, a single word can suffice.

The trusting of faith does not turn us into irresponsible individuals. On the contrary: a communion with Christ opens us to run the risk of responsibilities.

Like waves coming closer and closer together, societies are changing at an ever faster rate. For a great many people, this means being unsure about what tomorrow will bring. Seeing no way out, some withdraw into themselves.[11]

But what responsibilities can we take on to prepare a different future?[12]

Far from inviting us to withdraw, the Gospel suggests quite concrete ways.

One of them leads to simple gestures of sharing, even with limited resources. And — what surprise! — such gestures have repercussions of incalculable generosity.[13]

Another way is to focus our energies in order to curb all forms of hatred. They can lead to intolerance, and

5 Peace of heart is as deep as the sea. Sometimes we may be agitated, like the sea when it is stirred up by a gust of wind. But this disturbance only affects the surface. Silent happiness, peace, remain close by and are so much greater. One of the things Christians are called to do is to welcome the joy of Easter, born at the heart of the seemingly greatest failure, the cross, and to be bearers of that joy.

6 On the eve of his death, Jesus said to those around him, "I will send you the Holy Spirit to be your Comfort, your Support" (John 16,5-7). Invisible to our eyes, the Holy Spirit provides unexpected intuitions.

7 There are people for whom God is so dazzling that they are blinded and consider themselves agnostics; what they know of God is above all his silence.

8 Even when Jesus was on earth, there were people close to him who doubted. Almost all of us have to set out again and again on the road from hesitation and doubt toward the humble trusting of faith. This trust is sometimes viewed as gullibility or a lack of responsibility. Then faith no longer dares to present itself as a joyful and generous reality, but clothes itself in serious and silent, measured and prudent garments, as if to prove its relevance. And yet the Gospel invites us to a happiness of faith, to a freedom of faith.

9 The spirit of childhood has nothing childish about it. It keeps wonder and simplicity alive into adulthood.

10 We are awakened above all in prayer. But when we pray and nothing seems to happen, does this mean our prayers are not answered? No, there is no prayer that is not fulfilled. God answers us first and foremost within ourselves. When, for example, we entrust to God those who have hurt us, we already enter upon a way of peace.

11 These days institutions, whether political, economic or even religious ones, are losing their audience.

12 There are different kinds of responsibilities. Why should an elderly, ill or handicapped person worry and say, "I am not doing anything to make the earth a better place"? They persevere in hospitality, in prayer, and also in that goodness of heart and forgiveness which are at the centre of the Gospel.

13 As Christians, we belong to a spiritual family in which, from the time of the apostles, the Virgin Mary and the believers of the early days, there was a call to live in great simplicity and to share. Today, economists think that in the most prosperous regions of the world there will be no alternative but to accept a simpler standard of living in order to avoid tensions and excessive inequalities in the human family.

Taizé

Every Week of the Year: Meetings of Young Adults

Every week throughout the year, young adults can take part in meetings that bring to Taizé, from Sunday to the following Sunday, participants from the whole of Europe as well as from other continents. Those who spend a week in Taizé are brought into contact with the wellsprings of the trusting of faith, a trust that can resonate within them for a long time, for some people their whole life long.

For more information and to register for the meetings, write to: Meetings, 71250 TAIZE-Community, France. Tel (33) 85.50.30.02 (in English, 10am to noon and 4:30pm to 6:30pm) or, if urgent, (33) 85.50.30.30 Fax (33) 85.50.30.16

SOWING SEEDS OF TRUST

Meeting in Sydney, Australia.
23 - 25 April 1994

NSW Ecumenical Council
Box C199 Clarence Street PO
SYDNEY NSW 2000
tel: (02) 299 2215 fax: (02) 262 4514

Children from Bosnia in Taizé.

A young man from Sarajevo, who works thirty kilometres from the city, writes: "If God wanted us to be here, why not respond to what he expects of us? I am working with the little bit of food that I have, with my limited possibilities. The youth of Sarajevo greet you. We are praying that the pilgrimage of trust in Munich will go well."

IN 1994:

HELP TO NOURISH CHILDREN

In Africa: childen of lepers in Ethiopia.

In Europe: children, and elderly persons, among other places from Bosnia.

In Asia: what has been done for many years now for the children of Bangladesh will be widened.

In Latin America: to support what is already being done for children in the North-East of Brazil.

Helping AIDS Orphans in Africa

In Munich, Brother Roger launched an urgent appeal for solidarity with children orphaned by AIDS in Africa.

Particularly in East Africa, a large number of children have lost both mother and father because of this disease.

In general, these children are not placed in orphanages or taken away from the places in which they lived. Sometimes they are taken care of by their grandparents, sometimes by neighbours who already have their own children. In some cases the older children care for their younger brothers and sisters, creating families without adults. There is a great need to nourish these children and to ensure their schooling.

In Tanzania, through young people we know, we can already support ten families of orphans in Dar-es-Salaam.

We will also help care for orphans in Uganda through mobile teams that visit fifteen villages in the region of Masaka.

It takes approximately 200 to 300 US dollars to care for one of these children for a year.

Contributions can be sent to: From the UK: "Operation Hope," Account no. 50005576/53, Co-operative Bank PLC, Code 089075, 84 West Street, Sheffield S1 3SX. From the USA: "Operation Hope," c/o Taizé, 413 West 48th Street, New York NY 10036-1225. From IRELAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SOUTH AFRICA, etc., contributions can be sent in the same way as sums for subscriptions to the Letter from Taizé, making sure to indicate with your payment "for Operation Hope."

THESE MESSAGES WERE SENT FOR THE EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN MUNICH

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Brother Roger, Prior of Taizé

You have wished to inform the Holy Father of the sixteenth European meeting of young people, which will be held in Munich from 28 December 1993 to 1 January 1994; it will be a new stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth," where young adults will be invited among other things to reflect more deeply on the theme "All God can give is his love."

The Pope encourages all the young people present at this gathering to discover what God gives them each day, through their families, in their studies or their profession, in experiences of community and in their life as members of the Church. As they re-examine their history, they are invited to be responsible for the talents which God has placed in their hearts so as to give the best of themselves in order to build a world of greater justice and greater solidarity, first-fruits of the coming Kingdom. May they hear the call issued long ago by the author of the Letter to Diognetus: "The post which God has appointed for them is so beautiful that they are not permitted to desert it!"

The Holy Father wishes that this time of sharing and prayer may give the young the strength to be witnesses and missionaries in the midst of their brothers and sisters. He invokes upon those who are taking part in this meeting, on the community that is animating it, as well as on those who are welcoming them, the strength of the Spirit and the blessing of the Lord.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, GEORGE CAREY

My dear Roger,

Building Europe in a spirit of trust, the need for peoples of extremely diverse traditions to deepen their mutual understanding: these are themes that are close to my heart and right now they are in my thoughts and my prayers during your meeting in Munich. Taizé's contribution in this field is really very important. May God let it continue in this way for a long time.

Last year, after spending a week in Taizé with a thousand young Anglicans I wrote to them words that I want to share now with the young people from throughout Europe who are gathered in Munich: As you return home, let me remind you that your pilgrimage has not stopped. The Christian life is a pilgrimage—a journey with God through all the hazards and difficulties of life. So back to the ordinariness of our lives—but now transfigured through Christ who goes down the mount with us to serve others.

My prayers and my blessing for all those gathered in Munich.

PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

To reverend Brother Roger, Prior of the Taizé Community, grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the upcoming gathering of young people from the North and the South of Europe, we extend our greetings in our common Lord who, in Bethlehem and still today, visits the world and each one of us.

Young people beloved in the Lord,

As Ecumenical Patriarch we are with you all and we extend to you our blessing from this centre of the Orthodox Church. (...)

You have come from the ends of our old continent and once again you will return to your homelands. The whole world, your country, and you yourselves expect something from you. Following the example of the Lord, strive to offer yourselves so that others can live. And then you will truly find yourselves young and renewed.

Then in fact you will speak the language of the Church, the language of love, which is the mother tongue of human beings. And you will feel like brothers, and all will consider themselves as members of the same family. Then all things, pleasant or unpleasant, will be through you a blessing, and your arrival will be a cause of gladness for all.

We wish you with all our heart the riches of the Lord's goodness, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, MR. BOUTROS-GHALI

Dear Friends of Taizé,

For the sixteenth consecutive year you are gathered together to celebrate peace and friendship among human beings, understanding among peoples. An ecumenical and demanding faith brings you together. Respectful of differences, modern while rooted in eternal values, this faith cannot but move me: it illustrates in the best way possible the bonds of solidarity and love that should unite the members of the human community.

As Secretary General of the United Nations, I am overjoyed that tens of thousands of young adults from throughout Europe are searching in this way for a meaning for their lives as individuals and for the life of the human collectivity as a whole. I see here a cause for hope, a light shining in a world that too often appears disenchanted because of its harshness.

The Europe which, this year, is a particular topic of your reflections is still a new idea. And I like to think that the spiritual community which you represent prefigures what the Europe of tomorrow could be—inhabited, animated by a true concern for tolerance and for peace.

Once again the fraternal authority of Brother Roger presides over your gathering. A symbol, if ever there was one, of a commitment open to the wide world, it is a token of success for your meeting. And know that all my best wishes go with you.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY
George Carey

The Archbishop of Canterbury's own account of his pilgrimage to Taizé with 1000 young people in August 1992.

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MEDITATING ON THE WORD
MARCH

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day.
The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 **Is 30.15,18** Lk 6.36-38
TUE The Lord says: Your salvation is in returning and rest, your strength lies in calm and trust.

2 **Ws 11.23-24** Mt 20.20-28
WED Lord, you are merciful to all because you are almighty. You close your eyes to people's sins so that they can repent.

3 Jl 2.12-13 **Lk 15.1-3,11-24**
THU The Lord says: Come back to me with all your heart. Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to the Lord your God, for he is tender and compassionate, and rich in faithful love.

4 Dt 7.6-9 **Lk 15.25-32**
FRI Moses told the people: God set his heart on you and chose you, not because you are more numerous than other peoples, but it was out of love for you, and to keep his promise to your ancestors that the Lord delivered you from the land of slavery.

5 Jr 15.16 **Mt 18.19-22**
SAT Jeremiah said: When your words came, Lord, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart.

6 Ex 20.1-17 **Jn 2.13-25**
SUN On Mount Sinai, God said: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of slavery. You shall have no gods except me.

7 Jr 29.11-14 **Jn 4.1-14**
MON The plans I have for you, says the Lord, are plans for peace not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. When you seek me, you shall find me, for you will seek me with all your heart.

8 **Jn 4.14-26** Zc 1.3b-4b
TUE Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

9 **Jn 4.27-42** Mi 7.14-16
WED Jesus said: My food is to do the will of the One who sent me and to complete his work.

10 **Mi 7.18-20** Jn 4.43-54
THU What God can compare with you, Lord, for pardoning sin and overlooking transgression? You will again have compassion on us, treading our sins underfoot.

11 **Mk 12.28-34** Hos 14.2-5a
FRI Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.

12 Hos 6.3-6 **Lk 18.9-14**
SAT The Lord says: I desire faithful love, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.

13 **Jn 3.14-21** Ep 2.4-10
SUN God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

14 **Jn 9.1-12** Jr 20.7-9
MON Jesus said to his disciples: We must do the work of the one who sent me, while the daylight lasts. The night is coming, no one can work then. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

15 **Is 65.17-19** Jn 9.13-17
TUE The Lord says: See, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth. Be filled with rejoicing for ever, for I am creating my people to be gladness.

16 **Is 49.8-10** Jn 9.18-34
WED The Lord says: My people will not go hungry or thirsty, they will not be scorched by the heat of the desert, for the one who has compassion on them will be with them, guiding them to springs of water.

17 **Jn 9.35-39** Ezk 37.12-14
THU Jesus said to the man born blind: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" "Sir," the man replied, "tell me who he is, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said: "You have seen him; he is speaking to you."

18 **Is 43.16-21** Jn 7.1-18
FRI The Lord says: Look, I am doing something new, even now it is emerging, do you not see it? Yes, I am making a way in the desert and my people will sing my praises.

19 **Ws 10.9-12** Lk 2.41-51
SAT St JOSEPH The Wisdom of God led the upright along straight paths and showed them the realities of the kingdom of God.

20 **Jn 12.20-26** Jr 31.31-34
SUN Jesus said: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be.

21 **Jn 8.1-11** Is 42.1-4
MON Jesus said to the woman who had been brought before him: "Where are those who were accusing you? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir", she said. "Neither do I condemn you", said Jesus, "Go, and sin no more."

22 **Is 42.5-7** Jn 8.31-36
TUE The Lord says to his servant: I have called you in righteousness. I will take take you by the hand and shape you. I will make you a light to the nations.

23 **Jn 11.1-45** Is 49.1-6
WED Jesus said to Martha: I am the resurrection. The one who believes in me shall live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

24 **Is 53.1-5** Jn 12.27-32
THU The servant of the Lord bore our suffering. We have been healed by his wounds.

25 **Lk 1.26-38** Is 7.10-15
FRI Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

26 **Is 53.11-12** Jn 12.44-47
SAT The Lord says: After the ordeal he has endured, my servant will see the light and be content.

27 **Mk 11.1-10** Is 50.5-7
SUN PALM SUNDAY Jesus entered Jerusalem, and those who walked in front and those who followed shouted: Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the Kingdom that is coming!

28 Mt 26.30-46 **Mt 26.47-68**
MON Jesus prayed: My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as you will.

29 Mk 14.32-72 **Mk 15.1-32**
TUE Jesus said: Watch and pray, so as not to fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but human nature is weak.

30 **Lk 23.26-46** Lk 23.1-12
WED The criminal said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

31 **Jn 13.1-15** Lk 22.7-23
THU Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, now loved them to the end.

JOHANNINE HOURS

EXODUS 3,1-15

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Moses, exiled from Egypt after an abortive attempt to establish justice, is in the wilderness far off the beaten track when he encounters God. A bush is on fire but is not consumed. God thus becomes present in a way that reconciles poverty and splendour, the commonplace and the mysterious. Similarly, the encounter with the Lord both fascinates and frightens, because it draws human beings far from their securities and their routines.

The God who speaks "from the middle of the bush" is no unknown deity, but the God of Moses' ancestors who reveals himself in a new guise. Because of the sufferings of his people, he comes to them to liberate them and offer them a new life. To accomplish this, God seeks the help of Moses. But Moses, aware of his limitations, hesitates and asks for a guarantee — a name behind which he can hide and whose power he can make use of.

The Lord replies by revealing his Name above all names (v.14). An inexhaustible Name, that resists facile interpretations. A Name that emphasizes the sovereign freedom of God, who never allows himself to be trapped in human categories, as well as God's compassionate solidarity (cf. v.12: "I AM" with you). Thus in revealing himself as the Wholly Other, God shows himself to be infinitely close to human beings in their need. And Moses is called to return to Egypt, not as the possessor of a powerful Name, but as someone led forward by the assurance of a presence.

- According to this story, what is God's response to human beings who have doubts about their abilities?
- In what ways am I tempted to create a god to my measure, in order either to believe in or to reject such a god? What can help me remember that God is always beyond my understanding of him?
- To which men and women in need, whose dignity has been wounded, is God sending me? Can I show by the way I live the face of a God who opens a way toward freedom and life?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

APRIL

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Jn 19.1-37 Jn 18.28-40
1 **FRI** GOOD FRIDAY On the cross, Jesus said, "It is fulfilled", and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.

Jb 19.25-26 Mt 27.62-66
2 **SAT** Job said: I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will take his stand upon the earth.

Jn 20.1-18 Col 3.1-4
3 **SUN** EASTER DAY The Risen Christ said to Mary of Magdala: Go and find my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

Lk 24.13-49 Ac 2.14,22-28
4 **MON** The Risen Christ said to the apostles: This is what is written: The Christ will suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day. And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.

Mt 28.1-8 Ac 2.36-41
5 **TUE** The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid: I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen as he said he would."

Ac 3.1-10 **Mt 28.9-20**
6 **WED** Peter said to the crippled man, "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!"

Jn 20.19-23 Ac 3.11-21
7 **THU** The Risen Christ said to the disciples: Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.

Ac 4.1-12 Jn 21.4-14
8 **FRI** Christ, the stone the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone.

Ac 4.13-21 **Mk 16.1-8**
9 **SAT** When the Sanhedrin forbade them to speak in the name of Jesus, Peter and John replied, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Jn 20.24-31 Ac 4.32-35
10 **SUN** Jesus said to Thomas: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

Jn 3.1-8 Ac 2.42-47
11 **MON** Jesus said: Unless a person is born from above, they cannot see the kingdom of God.

Jn 3.7-15 Ac 5.27-33
12 **TUE** Everyone who believes in Christ will have eternal life.

Ac 5.34-42 **Jn 3.16-17**
13 **WED** Glad to have had the honour of suffering for the name of Christ, the first disciples continued to teach and proclaim the good news of Christ Jesus, both in the temple and in people's homes.

Ac 7.51-8.1a Jn 3.18-21
14 **THU** As they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And with these words he fell asleep.

Jn 6.1-15 Ac 8.1b-8
15 **FRI** After the people saw the miraculous sign worked by Jesus, they began to say: "Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, realizing that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew to the hills again, alone.

Ac 9.1-22 Mk 16.9-15
16 **SAT** As Paul was approaching the city of Damascus, a light from heaven shone around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" he asked, and the reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Lk 24.35-48 Ac 3.13-15,17-19
17 **SUN** The Risen Christ stood among his disciples and said: Peace be with you!

Ac 11.3,15-18 **Jn 6.22-29**
18 **MON** God has given all people the repentance that leads to life.

Jn 6.30-35 Ac 11.19-22
19 **TUE** Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jn 6.35-40 Ac 13.26-33
20 **WED** Jesus said: The will of the one who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all he has given me, but that I should raise it up on the last day.

Ac 13.34-43 **Jn 6.44-51**
21 **THU** Through Christ, forgiveness of sins is offered to everyone who believes.

Jn 6.60-69 Ac 13.44-49
22 **FRI** Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Ac 15.7-12 **Mt 28.1-10**
23 **SAT** Peter said: God, who knows human hearts, showed that he accepts all people by giving the Holy Spirit to all.

Jn 10.11-18 Ac 4.8-12
24 **SUN** Jesus said: I am the good shepherd. I have other sheep whom I must also lead. They too will listen to my voice, so there will be one flock and one shepherd.

1 P 5.5b-11 Mk 16.15-20
25 **MON** St MARK Peter wrote: Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you. Resist the tempter, standing firm in faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering.

Jn 10.1-10 1 P 1.1-5
26 **TUE** Jesus said: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

1 P 1.6-9 Jn 10.22-30
27 **WED** Though you have not seen Christ Jesus, you love him. Still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious it cannot be described.

Jn 12.44-50 1 P 1.10-12
28 **THU** Jesus said: Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me.

Jn 13.31-35 1 P 1.13-16
29 **FRI** Jesus said: Love one another just as I have loved you. By this, everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

1 P 1.17-21 Lk 24.1-12
30 **SAT** Through Christ you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for this very purpose — that your faith and hope should be in God.

JOHANNINE HOURS

1 PETER 1,3-9

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

For believers rooted in the hope of the Bible, the resurrection cannot be an individualistic matter; it is a collective event that marks the beginning of a new age (cf. Dan 12,2-3). What meaning can there be, then, in proclaiming that "Christ is risen" in a world that seems to go its own way with no apparent change?

At the beginning of his first letter, Saint Peter helps believers to see their way clear in this matter. By the resurrection of Christ, he tells them, God has brought you to birth anew; the object of your hope, what God has promised from the beginning, is now a reality (vv.3-4). True, you are still undergoing all kinds of hardships: evil and suffering have not disappeared by magic. And yet something has indeed changed; the very fact that you can believe in and love Christ "without seeing him" is already the proof that the life of resurrection is at work transforming the world.

In other words, the existence in the present time of women and men who support the difficulties of daily life with the cheerfulness and the constancy of faith prepares the universe to welcome and to recognize the Risen Lord when he is revealed in fullness (vv.6-7). The meaning of the Christian life can be summed up in joy, a joy beyond all attempts at explanation because it is rooted in the life of God, a joy that is already a real communion with the Christ who is not yet visible to the eye (v.8).

- Do I find in my faith in the Risen Christ a serene force that enables me to cope with the difficulties of daily life?
- Have I ever experienced, in the midst of the trials of life, a spark of joy that came from elsewhere? When and how? What can such experiences teach us about the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ?

even to wars. Without forgiveness, there is no future for our own self. Without reconciliation, what future is there for a people?

Alleviating human suffering is etched at the heart of the Gospel. And when we allay other people's trials, we do it for Christ; even more: in that way we encounter the Risen Lord.[14]

The day comes when we realize that God is never the one who causes misfortune or anguish.[15] God is innocent. God is innocence.[16]

When, through the Risen Christ, we understand this luminous reality, "All God can do is give his love,"[17] irresistibly a question arises: how can we communicate to others such a firm hope?[18]

Christ Jesus asks us that ancient and ever new question: "Do you love me?" If so, he invites us to communicate the humble trusting of faith to those he entrusts to us.[19]

To communicate faith in the Risen Christ, what would be the use of ready-made answers? We are Christ's poor. For this reason, it is important never to impose ourselves or to try and take prisoner another's conscience. But above all, may our life let the Gospel shine through!

Are there not people on this earth who radiate the holiness of the Risen Lord without even daring to believe it?

And the Holy Spirit keeps us alert. Choosing Christ means walking along just one road,[20] not two at the same time. Such a choice can entail giving things up; it leads to indispensable detachment.[21] But in our weakness, we are made strong in God.[22]

One day, Jesus spoke grave words regarding "those who lay heavy burdens on other people's shoulders, but are unwilling to lift a finger themselves to move them."[23]

In that communion of love that is the Body of Christ, his Church, how can we lighten the burdens of those entrusted to us? How can we open the

Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, sick and you visited me, a prisoner and you came to see me... Every time you did this for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me." (Matthew 25,35-40)

God wants neither wars, nor earthquakes, nor famines, nor accidents. God does not want the fighting in Bosnia or elsewhere. God is the cause neither of illness, nor fear, nor misfortune. God never comes to torment the human conscience. But Christ suffers with the innocent, with those experiencing distress.

For many years now, several brothers of Taizé have been living in Bangladesh, sharing the existence of the poorest of the poor. The heart bleeds to see ten- to twelve-year-old children working so hard, for example as bearers. Children with no families live in the railway station, sleeping on the platforms. In the station they are already like adults who must fight to survive. How marvellous, then, that when they come to see the brothers and find something to eat they become little children again; they like to play and to draw. These railway-station children know how to share the little they have, for instance with one of them who is in hospital with tuberculosis.

One day I was with my brothers in Bangladesh and we were invited to a meeting with Muslims in a poor neighbourhood. One of these Muslims, returning with me as darkness was falling, said to me, "All human beings have the same Master. This is still a secret that has not been revealed. But later on, people will find out." And he walked off into the night.

17 Saint Isaac of Nineveh, seventh century.

18 When a child has been brought to a place of prayer, a flame is kindled in that child. Perhaps it will be forgotten but it is possible that, later on, it will burn again. To communicate trust in Christ to a child, many words are not necessary: by placing one's hand on the forehead of a child, reminding him or her of the peace of Christ, the inner being of that child can be touched by the glow of an invisible presence that will leave its mark on them.

19 John 21,15-17.

20 Recently, after the death of our brother Robert, I found a letter from him. He wrote to me, "I feel more than ever that hunger for holiness I spoke to you about. That is the only true road. We must walk along it together."

21 Such a conversion of heart calls for a resolution with no turning back. When human beings no longer respond to the thirst for the absolute which is in them, their energies are depleted in monotony, in running away, in boredom. Responding to Jesus' words "Come, follow me" can express the deepest aspiration of a heart that desires everything and that wishes to give everything. Coming closer and closer to Christ's holiness thus becomes our identity at its point of greatest fulfilment.

22 II Corinthians 12,9.

23 Matthew 23,4.

gates of forgiveness and an inexhaustible goodness of heart?[24] These two realities are among the most astounding in the Gospel.[25]

Inconsistencies and inflexible attitudes can find their way into this communion. They cause a lot of suffering.

In addition, without even knowing why, multitudes of Christians in the course of history found that they were divided. Today, multitudes of Christians are innocent of the divisions that persist or that are created.

So then, are we going to run away from that communion which is the Church? No. To make Christ who is communion credible, all we can do is to run towards it, from the ends of the earth if need be, and discern the miracle of a presence.[26]

Even if we have very little faith, will we say to Christ: what do you expect of me?

May we always remember this: the wellsprings of jubilation will never run dry when a heart that trusts goes from one beginning to another.

Jesus, Risen Lord, you are the Saviour of every life. May those who seek you rejoice. Your Gospel tells us: I am familiar with your trials and your poverty, and yet you are filled. Filled by what? By the living springs, placed by the Holy Spirit in the deepest part of our being.

Christ Jesus, in us there is a silent longing. We would like not to keep anything in our heart hidden from you. You yourself were a human being. And when inwardly our being is scattered, our thirsting heart dares to say to you: enable me to live a life rooted in you, Christ; unify my desire and my thirst.

Christ Jesus, in us there is sometimes a great longing, but your voice makes itself understood. An inner voice that is a prayer steeped in silence. And, to pray, even a single word can suffice.

Bless us, Lord Christ; bless us and those you have entrusted to us. Keep us in the spirit of the Beatitudes: joy, simplicity, mercy.

God of all loving, you bury our past in the heart of Christ and are going to take care of our future.

24 Praying Christ's last prayer: "Forgive them, the don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23,34) brings to birth in us this other prayer: "Forgiv me, it happens that I too hurt others withou knowing it."

25 Christ is communion. He did not come to cre ate a new religion but to offer a communion in himself. It can never be emphasized enough tha no one can rely only on their own faith. Lovin Christ in that communion which is the Church means disposing ourselves inwardly to place ou trust in the Mystery of the Faith, in the humbl trusting which was that of the apostles, th Virgin Mary, and the whole cloud of witnesse down to the Christians of today.
For different reasons, some may find themselve in a situation where they do not receive th Eucharist. So, for centuries now, the story of th multiplication of the loaves has been a point o reference: one day Christ blessed five loaves o bread and distributed them to the crowd, to al without distinction (Mark 6,30-44). Thi generosity has been translated by the gesture o offering blessed bread. This is an expression o the Church's motherly love. Rather than be coming upset about this or that impossibility o receiving Holy Communion, why not offe blessed bread to everyone? In this way, each an every person present at the celebration of th Eucharist, without exception, can receive thi sign of sharing.

26 Would it be possible to prepare a common prayer on the last Friday of every month, an intense prayer, open to all, with the beauty of singing? It would be especially good to invite sick people to take part. This prayer could be preceded by a simple meal and a time of sharing. The way the inside of a church is arranged is so important in sustaining a common prayer. This does not mean restoring a church, but fixing it up within using very simple means, with no fundraising. If the seats are placed along the walls, an empty space, with no pews, is opened up where people can sit or kneel on old carpets. A roll of inexpensive cotton cloth can easily be found; it can be dyed, orange for example, and hung in the sanctuary. It takes very little for a church to be made hospitable: a few small candles, some icons...